

TO: Senate Taxation Committee
FROM: Jennifer Hill-Hart, Working for Equality and Economic Liberation member
DATE: 01/26/07
RE: SB 210 - Revise energy conservation and weatherization laws

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to you today. I am here to encourage you to support Senate Bill 210. For the record, my name is Jennifer Hill-Hart, and I am here as a member of WEEL, Working for Equality and Economic Liberation. The energy conservation and efficiency measures within SB 210 not only support healthy, comfortable homes, but in particular, demonstrate that economic justice is a priority in Montana.

WEEL is an organization comprised of low-income women and their families and their supporters. WEEL believes that economic justice is a basic human right and strives to turn the politics of poverty from a discussion about numbers to a compassionate conversation about people. SB 210 does just that. Energy efficiency and conservation measures are the absolute best way to help Montanans reduce their ever-increasing energy bills right away, but are also an investment in not only property value, but free funds for families to spend on other needs or save for the future.

By providing energy efficiency and conservation opportunities for low-income families', SB 210 supports low-income families' rights to make environmentally and economically conscious purchasing and investment decisions. Energy efficient homes are more valuable and help to support the community's economic base as well. Businesses and local contractors also stand to gain from the development and support of conservation and weatherization. In addition, money saved on energy bills will more than likely be spent locally. SB 210 will help strengthen the economic base of communities.

According to a 2005 report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the average low-income family paid \$200 or more in state taxes in Montana. When you are a two-parent family of four, making only \$19,961 a year, this is a lot of money (<http://www.cbpp.org/2-22-06sfp.pdf>). What better way can Montana support these families and their children, our future, than to support energy conservation and efficiency measures that free up much needed resources for our most vulnerable families. WEEL believes that public and private entities must ensure that no person is left in need. Through our relationships, we can build partnerships that will shift outcomes at the local, state and national levels to elect individuals that will have a positive impact on the lives of the people who elect them. SB 210 is an investment in Montana and its future.

Thank you.